



## IN HISTORY: IMMIGRATION AND ETHNIC HERITAGE

# Time Line

## Into the Twenty-First Century

Every decade in the twentieth century has introduced new challenges and new opportunities to the immigrant communities of Indiana, both those who had recently arrived and those whose ancestors were foreign born. From world wars, economic hardship, and prosperity, to ongoing efforts to improve civil rights and thwart acts of terrorism, each era has impacted the lives of Indiana's newcomers and enriched the state's ethnic heritage.

German Americans continue to make up the largest ethnic group in Indiana. African Americans, while still a relatively small community in central and southern Indiana, have played a strong role on this state for more than two hundred years. There has also been a remarkable increase in Latino and Asian populations during the last thirty years. By the year 2030, it is estimated that Latinos will make up the largest minority group in the United States.

Tolerance and equality are still ideals our nation struggles to achieve. Some centuries-old patterns persist. For example, wages for new immigrant communities, especially people of Mexican descent working in service industries or in the migrant camps in Indiana farmlands, continue to be significantly lower than that of any other ethnic group in the state, despite the fact that Latinos in the 1990s were the fastest growing minority group

in Indiana. Responses to immigration remain uneven, especially as factories close throughout the state and economic hardships emerge. These are difficult issues to confront. It is necessary to recognize not only the cycles of tolerance and restriction that have emerged during the past two hundred years, but also how these directly shape immigration policies and public perception today.

In order to understand our own histories, it is important to detail the personal struggles, community responses, and immigration legislation, both positive and negative, that have affected immigrant communities in Indiana. It is equally important to recognize the impact of global events on immigration patterns and our response through government policies. By remembering the tremendous benefits to Indiana contributed by these newcomers to our cultural, political, and economic heritage, we will be able map a blueprint of our future.

Immigration history is much more than statistics, more than dates and details of legislation, and even more than the individual memories of our neighbors and our ancestors. It is a story of hope and possibility, as well as of struggle and survival. Immigration history is a complex, living heritage that continues to shape and define this place we call home.

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